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 FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
 TO RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE 2265
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 INFO RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 9528
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE 7566
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 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 6720
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EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO RUMSFELD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PREL, MOPS, PGOV, US, LE, SY
 SUBJECT: SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM DISCUSSES LEBANON WITH
 - CODEL FOWLER - FEBRUARY 15

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. FULL MEMCON WILL FOLLOW OF CONGRESSMAN FOWLER'S NINETY MINUTE DISCUSSION WITH FON MIN KHADDAM AT MIDDAY LOCAL TIME FEBRUARY 15. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS BEARING DIRECTLY ON CURRENT LEBANESE SITUATION.
3. KHADDAM SAID SYRIA CONTINUES TO WANT BETTER RELATIONS WITH US. IN LEBANON THE USG SHOULD DO TWO THINGS -- (A) WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS, MOVE THE FLEET OFFSHORE AND HELP PERSUADE ALL PARTIES TO A POLITICAL DIALOGUE; (B) MAKE GEMAYEL UNDERSTAND HE CAN BE PRESIDENT OR HE CAN TRY TO KEEP THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT.
4. MOST IMPORTANT, KHADDAM EMPHASIZED, IS THE FACT THAT THERE CAN BE NO PEACE OR STABILITY IN LEBANON IF THE LEBANESE PARTIES GO INTO NATIONAL DIALOGUE WITH ANY ONE SIDE REGARDED AS THE VICTOR OR VANQUISHED. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL, THEREFORE, SHOULD COME TO THE TABLE NEITHER AS A WINNER OR LOSER.
5. AMBASSADOR TWICE PINNED KHADDAM DOWN -- WAS KHADDAM SAYING THAT SARG SUPPORTS GEMAYEL AS THE LEGITIMATE PRESIDENT OF LEBANON WHO MUST PLAY HIS LEGITIMATE ROLE. KHADDAM SAID UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT IS SYRIA'S POSITION, ADDING, HOWEVER, THAT GEMAYEL CANNOT CONTINUE IF HE TRIES TO INSIST ON MAY 17. AMBASSADOR PRESSED HARD TO HAVE KHADDAM ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MAY 17 SHOULD NOT BE AN OBSTACLE TO POLITICAL DIALOGUE BUT SHOULD BE PART OF THE POLITICAL DIALOGUE. KHADDAM ADAMANTLY REJECTED THIS -- MAY 17 HE INSISTED IS THE OBSTACLE TO NATIONAL DIALOGUE.

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PAGE 002
TOR: 151415Z FEB 84

NC 3382500

6. KHADDAM PRESSED HARD ON THE THEME THAT GUNS CANNOT SOLVE THE LEBANESE PROBLEM:

-- THE LAF TRIED FORCE IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS AND THE ARMY HAS DISINTEGRATED.

-- JUMBLATT IS TRYING IT NOW, BUT SYRIA HAS TOLD "THE OPPOSITION" THEY MUST STOP AT THE PRESENT LIMITS SINCE (LIKE THE PHALANGE) THE OPPOSITION MUST NOT ENTER DIALOGUE AS A VICTOR.

-- AS THE USG IS FULLY AWARE, SYRIA HAS PREVENTED MILITARY ACTION FROM SYRIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS, AND IS CONTINUING TO DO SO; MORE THAN 20,000 DESERTERS FROM THE LAF WOULD BE EAGER TO MOVE INTO JUNIEH AND BIKFAYYA, BUT SARG WILL NOT PERMIT THEM TO DO SO.

-- AMERICAN USE OF FORCE IS DEEPLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE; "A FEW KIND WORDS" TO LEBANESE PARTIES WILL DO MORE FOR A CEASEFIRE THAN ALL THE SHELLING FROM THE NEW JERSEY; THE FEB 14-15 DRUZE ATTACK IS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE USG HAVING CONVINCED GEMAYEL THAT THE US WILL SIDE WITH HIM; GEMAYEL'S CONSEQUENT SHELLING INTO THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS (AS OPPOSED TO ALONG THE CONTACT LINE, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCEPTABLE) HAS MADE 100,000 HOMELESS AND INFURIATED THE SHIA', JUST AS DEVASTATING LAF ATTACKS INTO THE SHUF HAVE INFURIATED THE DRUZE.

AMBASSADOR REITERATED FORCEFULLY OUR POLICY OF SELF DEFENSE. WHEN WE USE A BIG STICK, IT IS BECAUSE SOME OTHER PARTY HAS SOUGHT TO ATTACK US. WE WILL DEFEND OUR FORCEH.

7. KHADDAM SAID SYRIA'S POLICY CONTINUES TO BE BASED ON TWO PRINCIPLES -- OBTAINING A CEASEFIRE AND MOVING TO GENEVA ON AN "EQUAL FOOTING" (I.E., NO VICTOR OR VANQUISHED).

8. KHADDAM INTRODUCED AN ELEMENT HE HAD NOT HEARD BEFORE AND WERE UNABLE TO FOLLOW UP IN THIS SHORT MEETING. IN OUTLINING SARG'S SCENARIO FOR GETTING TO GENEVA, KHADDAM SAID SYRIA AGREES WITH THE NSF VIEW THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD ANNOUNCE ABROGATION OF MAY 17 AND THEN EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF PARTICIPANTS TO ALLOW THOSE NOT REPRESENTED THERE TO JOIN IN THE DIALOGUE. AFTER A WEEK

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OR SO, SYRIA BELIEVED AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED AND A GNU APPOINTED TO IMPLEMENT DECISIONS. (COMMENT: REFERENCE TO EXPANSION OF THE PARTICIPANTS PRESUMABLY TAKES US BACK TO PRE-SEPTEMBER 25 ARGUMENTS AS TO SPECIFIC CONFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION, ISSUES SUCH AS WHO SHOULD REPRESENT THE GREEK ORTHODOX, ETC., ETC. KHADDAM MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCE TO THIS POINT, HOWEVER, AND IT MAY NOT BE INTENDED AS A NEW ISSUE.)

9. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. PAGANELLI
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